

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

The status of women in Hindu society has changed from line to line. Women's position has passed through various phases. In ancient India, particularly during the Vedic period, women enjoyed a very high status in the family as well as in the society. She had equal rights with men and enjoyed freedom increasing her life partner. In joint family, her authority was accepted and she had full liberty of action. R.K. Sapru (1989) in his book, "Women and Rural Development," mentions Altaker's view on women. According to Altaker, "Women played a more active economic role and participated in rituals, and girls in higher society were allowed to undergo the upanayana rite." During the later Vedic period, the position of women slowly began to decline. Altaker sees "the period from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1800 as one of the progressive deteriorations in the position of women in the Indian society." K. Venkata Reddy views that, after the Vedic period the birth of a daughter was not quite welcome. The evils of child marriage, polygamy and dowry system that entered the social system during the Maurya and Gupta periods and the Purdah system of Muslim period degraded the status of women in society.

The effects of social reformers helped to a considerable extent in the social liberation of women. Gandhi worked hard for bringing women on an equal footing with men. However, while taking into account that the status of women varies from country to country, there is wide difference in levels of status between women in developed and developing countries, the level of status of women is low in the developing countries. Even within a country the level of social status differ from rural to urban areas. The status of women in India is determined by various socio-economic factors like education, employment and income etc.

India has adopted some unique measures to promote equality and development of women. It has one of the most forward looking Constitution and has number of legislations to protect the interests of women and to encourage their participation in national development. The Constitution of India promises social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression belief, faith and worship and equality of status and of opportunity. The Constitution of India guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedom to realize these goals. Women benefit from these rights equally with men. Not only this, the Constitution grants equality to women in all spheres and also empower the state to adopt protective measures for neutralizing the cumulative social, economic, educational and political

disadvantages of women and for making special provisions for promoting their growth and development. The provision has enabled the state to draw up special policies and programmes to benefit women, set up special committees and commissions to study the problems of women, enact many labour laws and social legislation benefiting women and even reserving seats and quotas for women in educational institutions local bodies, training and employment schemes and in government jobs.

Equality of opportunities in employment helped to ensure a significant position and status of women in India has resulted in increasing number of women in public services. The equal remuneration Act, 1976, provided for equal remuneration to men and women and attempts to prevent discrimination on grounds of sex against women in matters of employment and other connected matters. The special attention given to the needs and problems of women as one 'the weaker section' of Indian society. Politically equality radically changed the position and status of women.

The National policy on Education, has accorded highest priority to women's education and emphasises that the entire system must be built in provisions for women empowerment. The NPE lays special emphasis on the eradication of disparities by providing equal opportunities to men and women. The most

welcome tendency in women's empowerment and education activities is a serious effort to co-ordinate the programmes of formal and non-formal education, health and family welfare.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

All though one of the major concerns for the Indian society has been a fair deal in the distribution of human resources. Particularly education among various social groups. This emerges from the Constitutional commitment to Indian society contained in the Directive Principle of State Policy.⊕

Endorsing the Constitutional directive, various Educational Commissions, especially the Education Commission (1964-66) and the Educational Policy 1986 have emphatically suggested to promote education among the weaker sections of the society as a measurement to distribute the human resource more equality.

⊕ The Article 38 of the Constitution says: "The State shall to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life." The following Article specifies the areas where the State has to take special interest: 'Provision of adequate means of livelihood to every citizen, a fair distribution of wealth and means of production and ensuring equal pay for men and women.'

However, much progress has not been achieved in equalizing the educational opportunities to the weaker sections of the society. The quantity as well as the quality of education among the weaker social groups are very low (G.C. Casper, 1991). Among the weaker section, women are at vulnerable position. A fair distribution of education in terms of quantity and quality to women is very much needed. This is required not only from the point of promoting social justice, but also from the angle of promoting economic development in the country because development of men and women are interdependent and indivisible. Moreover, educating women is key to development of the family and the society, as it has high correlation with health, education, social and economic development of the country (IBRD – 1991). Gandhiji remarked long back that “educating a man is educating an individual while educating a woman is educating a family.” It is found that in India, the literacy rate is very low. In spite of a gradual increase of literacy rate from 1901 to 1991. The particulars of literacy level in India are presented in Table 2.1.

It is clear from Table 2.1 that the literacy level of women is very low, when compared to men during from 1901 to 1991.

TABLE 2.1
ALL INDIA LITERACY RATE (Per cent)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
1901	9.8	0.6	5.3
1911	10.6	1.1	5.9
1921	12.2	1.8	7.2
1931	15.6	2.9	9.5
1941	24.9	7.3	16.1
1951	24.9	7.9	16.7
1961	34.4	13.0	24.0
1971	39.5	18.7	29.5
1981	46.9	24.8	36.2
1991	63.86	39.42	52.11

Source : Census Report, 1991.

The UGC Annual report, 1994-95 shows that the enrolment of women to total enrolment is only 33.8 per cent. It is a matter of great concern that the rural urban differential in literacy increased at a faster rate in 1991. Roughly, the literacy rate of women is at the same level as that of men was three decades ago. There are also wide regional variations between states like Kerala which is

near universal literacy and Rajasthan having only 20.8 per cent female literacy.

Female literacy in rural areas at 30.6 per cent is still very low and is less than half of the literacy rate in urban areas. The under-development of rural areas is the major cause of under development of education among rural females. The reason for non-enrolment of rural girls are a combination of educational and extra educational factors. The existing evidence points to the low access and provisions of educational facilities and lack of adequate supportive services of childcare. Medical and healthcare, lack of convenient sources of water, fodder and fuel in rural areas. Girls are put to there hard tasks early. Low female literacy and associated low status of women, low parental education and apathy to education of daughters and low valuation of female life itself and discriminatory attitudes towards female child in access to food, healthcare, education, leisure, and early marriage of girls are extremely under developed in terms of infrastructure to include basic services of education health, water, electricity, road communications etc. Also it is a matter of great concern that approximately 30 to 40 per cent of rural population is below poverty line.

WOMEN AND WORK

Our constitution guaranteed equal right of work for both men and women. Article 39(d) says, "that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 39(e) says, "that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender citizens are not forced by economically necessity to strength". Women contribute a major work-force in India, they work for long hours both at house and outside of the home, but their work is unacknowledged or under reported in labour statistics. The work of women is usually invisible because it is mostly located in the democratic sphere and as a rule, household tasks defy quantification and monetary valuation.

WOMEN AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Owing to mechanisation and technological changes there is a tendency to replace women is shifted to their homes where they have to devote 16 to 18 hours per day for processing longer out put. There are also other activities like firewood collection, sewing for the family etc., where they are engaged. If these indirect productive activities are also taken into account female participation will exceed the males. From the following, it may be seen that all our plans and other policy statements like the 20 point programmes have included this item high on the agenda.

The employment opportunities have considerably increased over the past three decades and at the beginning of Eighth Five Year Plan.

The report of the Committee of experts on unemployment estimates observed that, estimates of growth in labour force of additional employment generated in the plans and of unemployment at the end of the plan period presented in one dimensional magnitude are neither meaningful nor useful indicators of the economic situation. Gainful employment is vital for improving the quality of life of the people. Hence, income generating activities are given importance in rural development strategies. Gainful employment helps women to improve their socio-economic status and enable them to participate in nation building activities.

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

In view of the low status of women, Government have launched several programmes for the welfare of women. Though some of the programmes are not specified for the welfare of the woman, due importance was given for the development of women. The general objective of development programmes for women is to improve their status especially in rural areas.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (1952)

The Community Development Programme launched in 1952 addressed itself more to decentralisation of development efforts. Besides giving a development administration whose focal point was the C.D. Block, the programme had succeeded to some extent in creating a viable infrastructure in rural areas, including the extension of machinery. However, it did not succeed to the desired extent in generating community efforts and combining the same with those of the government for bringing about a process of self-sustaining socio-economic development in the rural sector.

RURAL WORK PROGRAMME (1961)

Rural works programme was started in 1961 and continued till the end of the third five year plan. The scheme aimed at the creation of additional employment opportunities for agricultural workers during the slack period in areas with high pressure of population and pronounced unemployment and under employment. As such these schemes were taken-up to employ a higher proportion of unskilled labour. During the period of its operation viz., 1961-62 to 1965-66 a total expenditure of Rs. 1932-97 lakhs was incurred under this scheme and employment to the tune of 824.33 lakhs mandays were created.

RURAL MAN POWER PROGRAMME

The Rural Manpower Programme was launched in 1964-65 as centrally sponsored scheme, but was transferred to the state sector in 1969-70 to be continued from the state plan allocation. The main objective of the Rural Manpower programme was to provide additional employment opportunities to agricultural worker during the slack seasons through labour intensive community works especially in the areas exposed to pronounced seasonal employment and under employment. The aim was to provide employment for 100 day to at least 25 million persons by the end of Third Five Year Plan. An outlay of Rs. 150 crores was envisaged which was to be provided totally as Central assistance. In view of the constraint of resources only small provisions were made available for the programme on adhoc basis from year to year. This naturally created uncertainties about continuation and extension of the programme. The expenditure over a period of nine years was Rs. 35.06 crores resulting in the generation of 1370.21 lakhs mandays of employment.¹

CRASH SCHEME FOR RURAL EMPLOYMENT

The Crash Scheme for Rural Employment was launched in 1971-72 for a period of three years with approximately Rs. 50 crores allocation for each year. Initially, it was a non-plan scheme,

but was later on converted as a central sector plan. This programme was adopted on an experimental basis with the following objectives.

1. Generation of employment in all the districts, through labour intensive schemes, and
2. Production of assets of durable nature in consonance with local development plans, so that the alround development of the whole district can be brought out. In providing employment, preference was given to those persons from whose families no other adult member was employed, so that at least one person from each family would find employment.

The outlay for this programme was at the rate of Rs. 12.5 lakhs for each district. The scheme envisaged that if a year is taken as consisting of 10 working months and a month consisting of 25 working days on an average 2.5 lakh mandays of employment should be generated in each district.²

THE PILOT INTENSIVE RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (1972)

The committee on unemployment under the Chairmanship of B. Bhagavath felt that it would be more useful to start some pilot programmes in small compact areas in selected districts rather

than thinly spreading of resources all over the country resulting in poor impact. Their recommendation led to the formulation of the Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP). It was launched in 1972 and came to an end in 1975, though in some states the works taken up were allowed to continue for some more time. 15 districts were selected by the centre and one block from each of them was selected by the state government concerned for launching the PIREP.

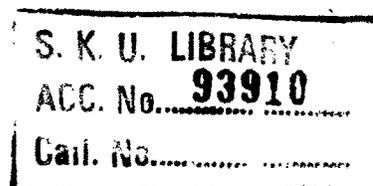
To study through the implementation of the projects in selected areas, the nature and dimensions of the problem of employment among the rural wage seeking labour and the effect of the project on the wage level in the area, if any, with a view to evolve a comprehensive programme for the rest of the country. The ratio of wage and material components was initially fixed as 70:30 but was later as modified to 60:40.*³ Works directly and indirectly related to agricultural production was taken up.

FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAMME

The Government of India launched in April 1977 a nation wide "Food for work programme" to enlarge the employment opportunities to the poorer sections of the community living in the rural areas. The programme was executed by the union ministry of Rural Reconstruction. Till 23rd October, 1980, a total of 56 lakh

metric tonnes of foodgrains were released. The actual utilisation was, However, to the tune of 4 and 5 lakh metric tonnes. Employment generated till the end of 1979-80, since the inception of the programme in 1977 is reported to be 8.686 lakh mandays. The scheme aims at direct benefits to the persons in the rural areas who live below the poverty line by providing them opportunities of employment and raising their incomes and nutritional levels.

EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (1981)



In continuation of the food for work programme, another scheme to generate employment was launched in the name of Employment Guarantee scheme on the basis of experience of Maharashtra, the Andhra Pradesh Government had started this programme in 1981 to cover a minimum of their villages in each of three hundred blocks in the State. It's aim was to provide employment to every adult person in the selected village for doing unskilled manual work and to receive wages for weekly or in any case not later than fortnight.

NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

In the light of the experiences gained by the Government of India with regard to the Food for work programme, a new

programme known as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was launched in October 1980 in the place of Food for work programme. The NREP became a centrally sponsored programme with effect from April 1, 1981 on a 50:50 sharing basis between the Government of India and the States.

The programme has three basic objectives. They are as follows:

1. Generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under employed persons, both men and women in the rural areas.
2. Creation of productive community assets for direct and continuing benefits to the poverty stricken groups and for strengthening rural, economic and social infrastructure, which will lead to a rapid growth of rural economy and steady rise in the income levels of the rural poor; and
3. Improvement in the overall quality of life of the people in the rural areas.⁴

The maintenance of the assets for which funds and systems are ordinarily not available will be the responsibility of the District Rural Development Agency. For the maintenance of these assets,

funds upto 10 per cent of the allocation under National Rural Employment Programme for the district can be utilised.

The allocation of resources to the states and union territories is made on the basis of 50 per cent weightage given to the number of agricultural labourers and marginal farmers and 50 per cent weightage to the incidence of poverty in each State/Union Territory. The State / Union Territories are required to allocate resources to the districts on the same basis. In case figures regarding the incidence of poverty are not available, 50 per cent weightage should be given to the number of persons belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in the district.

Ten per cent of the resources of the National Rural Employment Programme is earmarked for works of direct and exclusive benefits to the population belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes similarly ten per cent of the resources are earmarked for social forestry works, which has been raised to 20 per cent of the annual cash allocation in 1985-86.⁵ Again during 1986-87, this earmarked allocation was further increased from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of which 5 per cent of the allocation can be used for promoting decentralised nurseries.⁶

**INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (IRDP)
(1978-79)**

A programme of Integrated Rural Development was launched in 1978-79 by merging the earlier schemes, such as Community Development Programme, Small Farmers Development Agency, and Marginal Formers Development Agency.

The main objective of the programme is to improve the economic and social conditions of the poorest sections of the rural society. It aims at providing additional employment generation and raising of incomes of all the poor families who live below the poverty line. The thrust of the programme is the poorest of the poor, consisting of small and marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, rural artisans and craftsmen belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Important to mention here is that, this is the only programme where 30 per cent of women should be covered under the programme.

The IRDP helps with the intention of improving the incomes of the poor whose income is below Rs. 6400/-. The selected families will be provided subsidy and loan. This programme was implemented through the District Rural Development Agency. The IRDP was in operation in 5001 blocks in the country during the

year 1981-82. The total financial allocation under the programme was Rs. 4500 crores for the period of five years for 15 million families on 5,001 blocks. 600 families in one block in one year would get about Rs. 18 lakhs which nearing roughly Rs. 3,000 per family per block in a year and of this amount Rs. 2000 is given as loan and Rs. 1000 as subsidy upto 1985, 165.62 lakh beneficiaries were benefited under this programme.

PERFORMANCE DURING 1996-97

During the 1996-97 against the allocation of Rs. 1097 crores, Rs. 4979.74 crores have been utilized upto November 1996. The Ministry has fixed a credit target of Rs. 2142 crores for the programme of which Rs. 591 crores have been mobilised during the first eight months of the financial year. A total of 6.2 lakhs families have been covered during this period of which Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribe account for 45 per cent and women 33 per cent of the total coverage.

During the Eighth Five Year Plan, by November 1996, about 97 lakh families have been covered. There has been a shift of emphasis from more coverage of families to qualitative aspects of the programme through enhancement of the average level of investment per family. In order to achieve this, the family credit plan that was launched on a pilot basis in 1991-92 was extended

to cover 213 districts of the country in 1994-95. Its further extension is under active consideration of the ministry. Credit targets are being fixed from 1995-96 onwards. As a result of these interventions, the average level of investment per family which was Rs. 7889 at the beginning of the Eighth Plan period has now crossed Rs. 14,400 during 1996-97.⁷

All the above important programmes are meant for employment generation for both men and women. The Government of India first time have launched a programme exclusively for women in the year 1988-89. The programme is "Development of women and children in rural areas".

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS

Women generally spend their earnings on the welfare of their family members specially on their children. It is very necessary to improve the diet of children in order to improve their general health. If the earning power of women increases, it is expected that the total well-being of the family specially the diet, health and education of their children will improve. Women's income is known to have a positive correlation with the nutritional and educational status of the family and in the building up of a positive attitude towards the status of women. With an intention of improving the income and family well-being, a programme called "Development of

women and children in rural areas" (DWCRA) was initiated by the Government of India in the year 1982-83. On a pilot basis it was launched in broader way during the year 1988 as a sub-scheme of IRDP.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

DWCRA aims at women because when resources are scarce services are few, it is always the women who are most affected. The main objectives of DWCRA are as follows:

- Improving the status and quality of life of poor women and children in the rural areas.
- Enabling women to improve their earning capacity.
- Improving the impact of ongoing development programmes by stimulating, supplementing, strengthening and integrating them.
- Involving the community in planning and implementing the programme so that need based development activity will be carried on by the communities even after outside assistance is withdrawn.

STRATEGY

A distinguishing feature of DWCRA is group strategy as against family as a unit of assistance under IRDP. The women members of DWCRA forms groups of 10-15 women each for taking up economic activities united to their skill, aptitude and the local conditions. The group strategy was adopted to motivate the rural women to come together and to break social bonds which had denied them income generating and self fulfilling opportunities. The group approach has been extended to all districts for greater coverage of women under IRDP with effect from 1.1.1990. UNICEF assistance is, however, being extended in a phased manner so as to cover all districts by the end of Eighth Five Year Plan.

COVERAGE

DWCRA was started in 1982-83 with UNICEF assistance as a pilot project in 50 selected districts. Since then there has been a phased expansion every year. As of 31.12.1991 it has been implemented in 240 districts all over the country. It is proposed to cover all the remaining districts during the Eighth plan.

FORMATION OF GROUP

The scheme envisage formation of group of 15-20 women. The women are expected to come together for an activity of mutual

interest to all. The centre point for the group may or may not be an income generating activity. Income generation must, however, be an essential ingredient of the total activities in which the group is involved. Formation of a group can be a time-consuming process. The staff provided for DW CRA are Apo Mukhya Sevika and Gram Sevika. The Gram Sevika must spend adequate time in educating the target group women on the one hand and at the grass-root level, the Government functionaries on the other. The group will process the information, identify and a group organiser who will take the responsibility of liaison work.

The assistance available to a group is:

- (a) Rs. 15,000 as a one time grant contributed in equal measure by Central and State Governments and UNICEF, which can be used as:
- Revolving fund for purchase of raw materials and marketing.
 - Honorarium to a group organiser which may not exceed Rs. 50 per month for a period of one year.
 - Infrastructure support for income generating activities, and
 - One-time expenditure on child care facilities.
- (b) Travelling allowances Rs. 200 for one year for the group organiser.

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

All viable economic activities can be undertaken under DWCRA. The activities should be identified by the group suitably aided by the Gram Sevika, Mukhya Sevika and APO. These functionaries should also ensure that the backward forward linkages for selected projects are available in that area and identified institutions such as KVIC, KVIB, DIC, State-owned Corporations etc., are able to provide supportive services as well as infrastructure facilities.

MULTIPURPOSE COMMUNITY CENTRES

For providing support to women group DWCRA includes provision of multi-purpose community centres. The centre is designed to provide space for training and demonstration, conduction of income generating activities, a Balwadi for children and residential accommodation for the Grama Sevika. The cost of construction of multi-purpose centres can be met out of the funds allocated under Jawahar Rojgar Yojana. The powers of sanctioning the projects under JRY have been decentralised and the panchayats can authorise construction of DWCRA community centres. The additional material cost, if any, can be met out of the interest earning of DRDAs. Each completed centre is provided by

the UNICEF with equipment upto Rs. 50,000 for running the centre.

OTHER COMPONENTS

TRAINING

The programme lays utmost stress on training for motivation, attitudinal change and awareness of buildings. Training programmes have to be organised for functionaries who discharges the responsibility of implementation of the programme. Short duration orientation seminars may be held for senior officials who are unable to spend much time away from their jobs. State Government may draw up a list of core resource persons who can be drawn to impart training at predetermined time and place. It will also have to be ensured that all functionaries in-charge of DW CRA upto the level of assistant project officer are trained at least once during a year. Curriculum for the training may be worked out in detail in advance, so that the same message is transmitted to all functionaries and a proper attitudinal orientation is also built up.

STAFF

The programme visualised one officer, preferably a women of the rank of Deputy Secretary to State Government to be kept solely

incharge of the programme at the State level. At the district level, a woman officer may be appointed as Asst. Project Officer, DRDA, Supervised closely the implementation of the programme. The community development pattern of block administration provides a team of one Mukhya Sevika plus two Gram Sevikas. In case the posts of two Gram Sevikas have remained vacant and unfilled these should be filled up. In addition, one post of Gram Sevika has been sanctioned for DWCRA blocks.

The post of one officer of the rank of Deputy Secretary with supporting staff of Junior Assistant, P.A. and one Messenger, one woman APO for each DWCRA district and one Gram Sevika for each for each DWCRA block will be borne from the funds made available. The State Governments may drawn up job charts for these functionaries. In all cases it must be ensured that the umbrella approach of BDO being the coordinating official at block and Project Officer, DRDS at district level is retained for DWCRA functionaries.

FUNDING

If the group is registered under the "Registration of Societies Act" on the "State co-operative Act," it can get loan from the bank. Every memberr of the group can also receive subsidy and loan as per the IRDP guide lines. Each member will be individually

responsible for the repayment of loan taken and also jointly responsible for the group.

Separate budget provision is made under DWCRA to meet the expenses of items as follows:

1. Income generation supportive services/children facilities to be shared by Centre, State and UNICEF equally. In case of Union Territories, the expenditure is born by Centre and UNICEF.
2. Travelling allowances to group organiser to be funded by Centre and State at 50:50 basis. In case of Union Territories the expenditure on this item is met wholly by Centre.
 - Staff cost
 - Supplies and equipment (upto 50,000)for multipurpose community centre.
 - Training, workshops, seminars.
3. Assistance to voluntary agencies will be met out of Central resources and will be made available through CHART.

SKILL TRAINING

TRYSEM is expected to cater to fulfilling the skill requirements for beneficiaries of DWCRA also. The curriculum, duration of training, and rate of payment to trainers and trainees requiring the same should be in accordance with the norms of TRYSEM.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICE

In keeping with the overall objective of DWCRA the group is expected to develop into a receiving system which will be affective in obtaining benefits meant for the target group. The group must therefore be enable to take up facilities available for its members not only in the various rural development programmes being run by other Government organisations and departments for example, adult literacy, family welfare balwadis, immunisation of children in 0-5 age group. Efforts need to be made to see that the group assemblies at predetermined place and time, where functionaries, of their departments can also reach item to transmit their message or services. This would also require effective lesson by development administration with functionaries of other Government departments concerned.

DWCRA is being a sub-scheme of IRDP, the major responsibility to plan, implement and monitor the scheme of DWCRA is also entrusted to the DRDA. An APO (woman) has been provided in each such DRDA, as member of the team, who is the key person to co-ordinate and monitor the programme through the agency of development block.

CONCLUSION

India has adopted unique measures to promote equality and development of women and has number of legislations to protect the interests of women and to encourage their participation in national development. It is clear from the analysis that the percentage of women literates are very low compared to men and female literacy in rural areas is only 30.6 per cent which is half of the literacy rate in urban areas. Even though the women constitute a major workforce in India, their work is unacknowledged or under reported in labour offices.

In view of the low status of the women, the Government of India has launched several programmes for the development of women especially the programme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas with the objective of improving the status and quality of life of poor women and children in rural areas and enabling women to improve their earning capacity.

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